

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 IO-13 EB-08 DLOS-09 OES-07 COME-00 TRSE-00
ACDA-12 /116 W

-----093403 072143Z /14

R 070838Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
SECSTATE WASHDC 8570

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 10318

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: JA, NZ
SUBJECT: JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND: EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

1. JAPANESE PRESS HAS GIVEN CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN JAPANESE LEADERSHIP AND PRIME MINISTER MULDOON (MIKI TO MULDOON, MULDOON TO FUKUDA). FIRST, LATE MAY LETTER FROM FORMER PRIME MINISTER MIKI TO MULDOON, REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED MIKI'S CONCERN AT DETERIORATION IN JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONSHIP AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO HELP IMPROVE SITUATION. IT PROVOKED PUZZLEMENT AMONG NEW ZEALAND EMBOFFS HERE, WHO WERE UNAWARE (AS WERE WE) OF ANY MIKI-MULDOON CONNECTION, AND TELEGRAM FROM WELLINGTON REFLECTING EQUAL PERPLEXITY THERE. ONE OFFICER RECALLED THAT IN HIS BOOK, "MULDOON", NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER HAD BEEN HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY OF MIKI AND SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS MIKI HAD JUST GOTTEN AROUND TO READING IT. OTHER, AND MORE LIKELY MOTIVATION, WAS FELT TO BE MIKI'S PENCHANT FOR PLAYING ROLE OF STATES-MAN, PLUS GENUINE CONCERN FOR RATHER MUDDLED STATE OF JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND TIES. NEITHER WE NOR NEW ZEALAND EMBASSY KNOW OF ANY SPECIAL MIKI-SUZUKI RELATIONSHIP THAT
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WOULD HAVE PROMPTED LATTER TO SEEK MIKI'S BACKING FOR HIS RECENT FENCE-MENDING EFFORTS IN MELBOURNE.

2. IN ANY EVENT, MULDOON'S PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MIKI LETTER AS REPORTED HERE BY REUTER-KYODO, AND HIS SUBSEQUENT LETTER TO FUKUDA INDICATE, IN NEW ZEALAND EMBASSY VIEW, SOMEWHAT GREATER DISPOSITION TO TRY TO FIND COMPROMISE

SETTLEMENT TO TRADE/FISHERY DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. MULDOON LETTER TO FUKUDA, DELIVERED BY NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR MILLER ON JUNE 1, SAID HE WAS PLEASED WITH SUZUKI MEETING IN MELBOURNE MAY 19 AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT AS RESULT SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT COULD BE FOUND TO TRADE PROBLEMS. MULDOON CLOSED WITH INVITATION TO MAF MINISTER NAKAGAWA TO VISIT NEW ZEALAND AFTER JAPAN-AUSTRALIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE JUNE 26-27.

2. BOTH MOFA AND NEW ZEALAND EMBASSY HERE REMAIN CAUTIOUS, HOWEVER, AS TO PROSPECTS FOR AGREEMENT. NEW ZEALANDERS HAVE NOTED THAT MULDOON'S FLEXIBILITY WAS ONLY A RELATIVE THING, AND WERE UNCONVINCED TIME WAS YET RIPE FOR RESUMPTION OF HIGH-LEVEL TALKS. THEY WERE CONCERNED THAT SHOULD SUCH A MEETING END IN STALEMATE, JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS WOULD SUFFER MAJOR NEW SETBACK. JAPANESE TOO APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE THIS DANGER. ACCORDING TO OCEANIA DIVDEPDIR, MOFA VIEW WAS THAT THERE SHOULD BE GENUINE PROGRESS TOWARD AGREEMENT BEFORE NAKAGAWA AGREED TO GO. WHILE MOFA WAS ATTEMPTING TO PUT TOGETHER SOMETHING MORE ACCEPTABLE TO GNZ, THERE WAS NO ASSURANCE OF SUCCESS. HENCE, FUKUDA HAD NOT YET REPLIED TO MULDOON LETTER, AND, CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, NAKAGAWA VISIT WAS NOT SURE THING. MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO10318
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780238-0601
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780684/aaaacugp.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 07cacc8f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2446558
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND: EXCHANGE OF LETTERS
TAGS: PGOV, JA, NZ
To: WELLINGTON
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/07cacc8f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014